

Memorandum

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



DATE: February 3, 2003

TO: Deans, Directors and Chairs of Education

FROM: Jack Kean, Assistant State Superintendent, Division for Academic Excellence

SUBJECT: DPI Program Approval Content Review

The rules in PI 34 that govern the Department of Public Instruction's approval of teacher preparation programs include 10 basic standards that describe what a teacher needs to know and be able to do to be successful. This paper relates to part of standard I "The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry and structure of the discipline he or she teaches." It is not the pedagogy that is required in Standards 2-10.

There has been some confusion about what this content standard means and about the evidence that an Institution of Higher Education (IHE) program must provide the Department. Content knowledge in the subject or subjects the prospective teacher will teach is one of five areas of assessment required in PI 34.

There are two levels of content knowledge assessment and an IHE program must meet both of the following requirements:

- Content knowledge shall be determined by passing scores on standardized tests...which shall include Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards (MAS).
- Content knowledge assessment shall be developed according to standards adopted by the state superintendent...or standards adopted by the SCD using national standards, guidelines from learned societies or national organizations, or other recognized groups or organizations.

Please note that the MAS are included under the testing provision. PI 34 also includes the MAS in the required General Education component, and most of the MAS would have been met in or prior to the General Education/Liberal Studies part of the program.

It is acknowledged that someone who has a major (and the minor) has the knowledge defined in the MAS. Additionally there is no reason for most Letters and Science faculty to have to identify that each MAS is included in the program. We must assume for the most part that students enrolled in the content course would not be successful if they did not possess the knowledge skills and dispositions basic to the field. This may not always be true but we will assume that it is until proven other wise.

Assessments for entry and placement in IHE programs may be used as evidence of meeting the MAS requirement, and for reading, English and mathematics much of this content is included in the Praxis I test that we require. The rest of it is primarily covered by the appropriate Praxis II test.

There may be some exceptions to this for skills that one masters so early in life the that the processing skills will have to be taught to ensure that the teachers can articulate the concept to children—phonics comes to mind, and perhaps some basic arithmetic algorithms. These however can be taught in methods courses or other content courses designed to introduce these concepts to adults who work with children.

The documentation needed by the DPI for the program review includes the program standards (what program content does the IHE expect its students to know and be able to do at program completion?) and how the IHE is assessing that content knowledge. The Schools, Colleges or Departments of Education (SCDE) need to define what the content standards and assessments are in the license program that is being completed by the student. Note that the SCDE can create their own or adopt/adapt from other groups.

For the content review of material taught in Letters and Science we are not requiring the same knowledge, skills and disposition statements that we are asking for the other nine teaching standards. The L&S departments must tell us what their content knowledge standards are and how they are determining that the students have mastered the content. They can use their usual assessments, such as tests, lab reports, case studies to do this. We suggest that the institution look at the DPI Content Guidelines when developing content standards. An additional resource for consideration when reviewing content would be the Educational Testing Service (ETS) test descriptions at: www.ets.org.

In the end, the question that must be answered is: "Does the content in the subject at this institution cover the appropriate concepts to allow the graduate to teach the subject successfully in Wisconsin public schools?"